

BOOTS IN THE FOREST

NAME: Mary Faurot

POSITION: Cascade District Ranger

PHOTO LOCATION: Cascade Ranger District // Boise National Forest



CAPTION: Cascade District Ranger Mary Faurot is never sure just exactly what task will come her way each day. Over the course of her career she's worn a wide-selection of footwear, and that's still true in her position today.

When you think about the standard footwear an employee of the Forest Service would need to fulfill their duties, diving fins don't generally come to mind. However, Mary Faurot, Cascade District Ranger on the Boise National Forest, breaks the status quo. Her impressive collection of "boots" includes, not just fins, but wading boots, snow boots, fire boots, hiking boots, and a pair of clogs for office days. Her expansive collection tells the story of her long career in the outdoors.

Faurot received a degree in marine biology from Florida State University. Following college, she decided Australia was calling, and applied to numerous jobs throughout the country. She landed a position assisting graduate students from the University of Sydney with research around the Great Barrier Reef.

Leaving the ocean behind, Faurot returned to the United States and headed inland to Yellowstone National Park, where she took a position as a park ranger. During this time she "fell in love with the mountains."

Her newly discovered passion for forest-covered slopes and rocky peaks influenced her to chart her course for graduate school at Montana State University, where she furthered her education in fish biology.

Beginning her career as a fish biologist for the Confederated Salish Kootenai Tribe, Faurot spent many workdays snorkeling in Montana's Flathead Lake. She then migrated north to Alaska, where she worked for the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, studying salmon.

Faurot entered the U.S. Forest Service in 1990 on Oregon's Umpqua National Forest, where she served as the fish biologist for the Tiller Ranger District. After three years there, she moved to the Payette National Forest, where she worked as a fish biologist for over 17 years. In 2009, she arrived on the Boise National Forest, as the forest fish biologist. Then, for the first time in more than 20 years, Faurot stepped out of a fish biologist role, taking the position as Cascade District Ranger in 2012.

"As a district ranger, I get to get out of my role as a specialist. I'm putting puzzle pieces together and learning about other aspects of the agency," Faurot says about her current position. "I'm helping to put pieces in place for the great people on the Forest to complete."



Although she often finds herself in her office footwear, a trusty pair of black clogs, Faurot still relishes the days that allow her to be outside in the field. For her, there are two ideal types of workdays. An ideal day in the office is spent with the employees on the District, making progress toward common goals. An ideal day in the field means observing and interacting with one of the unique attributes on the Cascade Ranger District. Lately, that's meant working on salmon restoration or banding hawks.

Faurot is no stranger to fieldwork. There was even a time in her career that required her to pack around nearly her entire collection of "boots." While completing salmon, steelhead, bull trout and cutthroat surveys in the Frank Church Wilderness of No Return, Faurot had to pack in her wading gear, dry suit, hiking boots and fording sandals. While it was recommended that she carry fire boots as well, to respond to any smokes spotted, she says that's where she drew the line.

During the past 10 years of her career with the Forest Service, Faurot cites some of her favorite work as being the partnership between the Cascade Ranger District and the Nez Perce tribe. The partnership has been focusing on salmon restoration through the reconnection of spawning grounds and removal of out-of-use road systems.

“The partnership with the Nez Perce and the restoration of salmon habitat has been one of the most rewarding things to do,” believes Faurot, whose passion is made apparent by the wide smile and enthusiasm with which she talks about their work.

The Nez Perce, who depend on salmon both culturally and as a food source, have developed a sophisticated management plan for the fish. As part of a mitigation fund, Bonneville Power pays for salmon restoration work on national forests, providing funding for the Cascade Ranger District’s partnership with the tribe. The money funds the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process for each project, as well as, contract administration, consultations with regulating agencies and the work itself. Throughout the District, a number of projects have been completed or are in the process of being completed—removing culverts to restore stream flow, converting roads into trails to decrease sediment erosion into streams, and building bridges over popular fording sites located in spawning areas.

For Faurot, the forest isn’t just her place of work—it’s where she spends most of her time off as well. She enjoys a plethora of outdoor activities, including: hiking, backpacking, bird watching, fly-fishing, mountain biking, road biking, immersing herself in nature, reading and gardening. She draws inspiration from all of these activities, translating this passion into her work as a district ranger.

“As a district ranger, I’m trying everything together—all the disciplines that make the district function,” Faurot remarks. “Not only the employees, but the public as well.”

It’s obvious that Faurot’s passion for her work and nature hasn’t gone unnoticed. Both of her children are following in her footsteps, or maybe fin-swishes. Her son is a fly-fishing guide, splitting his time between the Olympic Peninsula in Washington and the Middle Fork of the Salmon River, in Idaho. He also has a degree in fish biology. Faurot’s daughter works in Salmon, Idaho on salmon habitat projects along the Lemhi River.

“The most important part about this job, and working for the Forest Service, is reconnecting people to their natural environments,” reflects Faurot on her career with the agency. “We’re contributing to ecosystem functions and the communities’ environmental awareness.”